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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fifty-first report submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016), paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017) and paragraph 12 of resolution 2401 (2018), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system[1] and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for April 2018.

[1] Input provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Organization for Migration, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, the Mine Action Service, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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II. Major developments

Box 1
Key points: April 2018

1. The reporting period witnessed a significant escalation in hostilities in parts of the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular in eastern Ghutah in Rif Dimashq in early April, and in Yarmouk and surrounding areas of southern Damascus city later in the month. Non-State armed opposition groups continued artillery shelling on areas in Damascus city, resulting in deaths, injuries and damage to civilian infrastructure. On 13 April, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America carried out air strikes on military targets inside the Syrian Arab Republic that were reported to be part of the Government's chemical weapons capacity. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic disputed the reports. The fact-finding mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons arrived in Damascus on 14 April and visited sites in Duma on 21 and 25 April to gather facts in connection with allegations of chemical weapons use on 7 April.

2. By the end of the reporting period, 158,000 people were reported to have left the previously government-besieged enclave of eastern Ghutah, moving either to sites for internally displaced persons in other parts of Rif Dimashq Governorate or, through evacuation agreements, to Aleppo and Idlib Governorates. The United Nations is not a party to these agreements and it has not been involved in evacuations.

3. In the north-western part of the country, the humanitarian response to the needs of an estimated 137,000 people displaced to the Tall Rif'at area of Aleppo Governorate due to military operations in Afrin district, and to Nubl, Zahra', Fafin and surrounding villages, continued. The lack of freedom of movement of people displaced from Afrin remained a major concern. Access from within the country to Afrin district itself remained cut off, but the United Nations delivered cross-border assistance to the area during the reporting period.

4. In Idlib Governorate, fighting between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups, as well as among non-State armed opposition groups, continued to be reported. The arrival of tens of thousands of newly displaced people following evacuation arrangements in eastern Ghutah and eastern Qalamun further stretched humanitarian response capacities and placed additional pressure on host communities in both Idlib and Aleppo Governorates.

5. According to reports from local observers, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees estimated that up to 6,000 Palestine refugees had fled the fighting in Yarmouk camp in the last week of April. Displaced Palestine refugees endured a dangerous and life-threatening journey through the Urubah checkpoint to seek shelter in safer areas in Yalda and Babila.

6. An inter-agency needs assessment mission to Raqqah city on 1 April confirmed extensive humanitarian needs amongst the estimated 100,000 returnees. The mission also confirmed high levels of explosive hazard contamination, including unexploded ordnances, landmines and improvised explosive devices, which continued to pose a significant risk to civilians and to humanitarian workers, as well as limited availability of basic services and widespread destruction.

7. The second Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region was held on 24 and 25 April. Participants reaffirmed the importance of an inclusive, comprehensive and genuine political solution in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué, noting that the humanitarian and resilience needs of people inside the Syrian Arab Republic and in

the region remained enormous, while current humanitarian appeals were severely underfunded. Participants pledged a total of $4.4 billion for 2018 for both the Syrian Arab Republic and the region, as well as $3.4 billion to cover 2019 and 2020.

8. United Nations humanitarian assistance reached millions of people in need, including 2 million people who received food assistance through regular deliveries. Access to hard-to-reach and besieged areas remained challenging, with no inter-agency convoys reaching such locations during April.

3. Since the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2401 (2018) on 24 February 2018, in which the Council demanded a cessation of hostilities, military operations have continued in various locations. Air strikes, artillery shelling and sniper fire were reported in the Governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah, Dayr al-Zawr, Homs, Hama, Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Dar'a and Qunaytirah as hostilities continued between the Syrian Government and pro-Government forces, and non-State armed opposition groups.

4. The reporting period witnessed a significant escalation in hostilities in parts of the country, in particular in eastern Ghutah and eastern Qalamun in Rif Dimashq, both of which were later seized by the Government following evacuation processes that included Duma, the last remaining enclave held by a non-State armed opposition group in eastern Ghutah. Prior to a ceasefire having been reached, military operations in Duma involved sustained air strikes and shelling, resulting in deaths, injuries and damage to civilian infrastructure and to health facilities.

5. On 13 April, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America carried out air strikes on military targets inside the Syrian Arab Republic. According to those Governments, the targets were reportedly part of the chemical weapons capacity of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. The fact-finding mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons arrived in Damascus on 14 April and visited sites in Duma on 21 and 25 April to gather facts in connection with allegations of chemical weapons use on 7 April.

6. In Yarmouk camp in southern Damascus, a major escalation between government forces and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) included ground offensives and artillery shelling, as well as air strikes. By 28 April, government forces had captured several areas from ISIL. On 30 April, an agreement was reportedly reached between government forces and Nusrah Front to evacuate fighters from Yarmouk, in return for the evacuation of more than 1,000 persons from Fu'ah and Kafraya, besieged by non-State armed opposition groups in the northern countryside of Idlib. On 30 April, the Government assumed full control over the area in Yarmouk camp formerly held by Nusrah Front, after evacuating hundreds of fighters and family members to Idlib Governorate. However, no evacuations took place from Fu'ah and Kafraya owing to the refusal by the populations of the town to leave in batches and their insistence on being evacuated all at once.

7. Shelling of areas of Damascus also continued from Yarmouk and eastern Ghutah during the reporting period, resulting in deaths, injuries and damage to civilian infrastructure.

8. In the northern countryside of Homs, between 13 and 18 April, pro-government forces launched a ground offensive, accompanied by artillery shelling and air strikes. On 18 April, a ceasefire deal was reached to resume the negotiations between

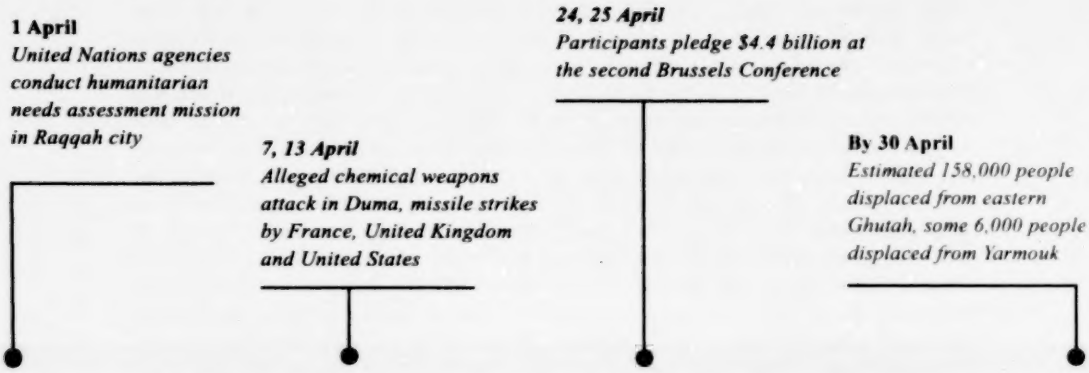
non-State armed opposition groups present in the area, and the Government and the Russian Federation.

9. Throughout April, my Special Envoy for Syria continued intensive high-level discussions with a view towards a meaningful relaunch of the United Nations-facilitated political process, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). To that end, he consulted widely with stakeholders at the summit of the League of Arab States on 15 and 16 April, as well as with me in Riyadh with the King, the Crown Prince and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia. The Special Envoy engaged Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United States in their respective capitals. At the 2018 Brussels Conference, my Special Envoy and his deputy met with representatives of China, France and the United Kingdom and other European counterparts. His efforts to reach a political solution, as envisaged by the Security Council in its resolution 2254 (2015), were recognized at the summit, the 2018 Brussels Conference, and were reaffirmed in the conclusions of the Council of the European Union and at the presidential and ministerial meetings, respectively, of the Astana guarantors in Ankara on 4 April and in Moscow on 28 April.

10. By the end of the reporting period, an estimated 158,000 people had left eastern Ghutah, moving either to sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq or through evacuation agreements to Aleppo and Idlib Governorates. As at 30 April, it was estimated that 44,703 displaced people from eastern Ghutah remained at sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq and were receiving various forms of humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations and its partners, in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and government counterparts. Despite significant progress in scaling up assistance and services at the sites for internally displaced persons, overcrowding remained a key concern, with some sites hosting more than twice their intended number of people. Protection risks stemming from overcrowding and a lack of privacy remained prevalent. A further 47,635 people had been authorized to leave the sites, through a sponsorship system put in place by the Syrian authorities, the details of which remain largely unknown. Some 66,300 people from eastern Ghutah were evacuated to northern governorates, where limited shelter availability, large concentrations of internally displaced persons and general insecurity, owing to air strikes, explosions caused by improvised explosive devices/vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and fighting between non-State armed opposition groups, remained the major challenges facing the newly arrived internally displaced persons.

11. As at 30 April, it was estimated that some 100,000 to 140,000 people remained in eastern Ghutah, half of them in Duma, although the continued lack of access by the United Nations to the area meant that verification of those figures and a comprehensive assessment of humanitarian needs were not possible. No inter-agency convoys reached eastern Ghutah during the reporting period. The most recent inter-agency convoy to any besieged area was completed on 15 March, when food was provided for 26,100 people in Duma. Nonetheless, the United Nations continued to provide food, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, protection and health support to people in eastern Ghutah through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and other local partners.

Figure I
Key dates in April 2018


1 April
United Nations agencies conduct humanitarian needs assessment mission in Raqqah city
7, 13 April
Alleged chemical weapons attack in Duma, missile strikes by France, United Kingdom and United States
24, 25 April
Participants pledge $4.4 billion at the second Brussels Conference
By 30 April
Estimated 158,000 people displaced from eastern Ghutah, some 6,000 people displaced from Yarmouk

12. Turkish forces, along with Syrian non-State armed opposition groups affiliated with Operation Euphrates Shield, continued Operation Olive Branch in Afrin, in Aleppo Governorate. The United Nations and its partners continued to respond to the needs of an estimated, as at 30 April, 137,000 people, who had been reportedly displaced from Afrin district to the Tall Rif'atarea, Nubl, Zahra', Fafin and surrounding villages. The lack of freedom of movement of people displaced from Afrin remained a major concern, with the population largely prevented from leaving areas of displacement to return to Afrin or reach other locations, including Aleppo city. Security screening procedures by the Government continued to delay the medical evacuation of critically ill patients to Aleppo city. Humanitarian access to Afrin city from within the Syrian Republic has not yet received the necessary approvals from the Syrian authorities, but assistance was delivered to the area through cross-border United Nations convoys in cooperation with the Turkish authorities.

13. Fighting continued in Idlib Governorate between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups, including air strikes and artillery shelling. Shelling on the towns of Fu'ah and Kafraya, besieged by non-State armed opposition groups, was also reported. Clashes between non-State armed opposition groups were also reported, as were a series of targeted killings. The overall humanitarian situation in Idlib remained dire, with more than 400,000 people having been displaced owing to fighting since December 2017. Camps for internally displaced persons in the north-western part of the Syrian Arab Republic, already operating far above capacity, received additional arrivals, following the evacuation to locations in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates of some 66,300 people from eastern Ghutah, 6,578 people from Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham in Rif Dimashq, and 6,238 people from eastern Qalamun.

14. The south-western part of the country saw continued violence and insecurity. Moreover, on 26 April, heavy rainfall caused severe flooding across many parts of the south of the country, resulting in damage to settlements for internally displaced persons in Qunaytirah and Dar'a Governorates. Protection monitors reported that the rates of new displacement and return of internally displaced persons in April were lower than during any month since the signing of the de-escalation agreement for the south-western part of the country in July 2017.

15. On 1 April, United Nations entities conducted the first inter-agency assessment mission to Raqqah since ISIL had left the city. The team estimated that approximately 100,000 people had returned to the city, despite high levels of explosive hazard contamination, including unexploded ordinances, landmines and improvised

explosive devices, which continued to pose a significant risk to civilians as well as to humanitarian workers. The team also confirmed extensive levels of destruction, with an estimated 80 per cent of buildings damaged or destroyed and decomposing corpses trapped under the rubble. Up to 52 people were treated for blast-related injuries during April. Returnees had access to electricity only through generators, where available, and while limited quantities of water were being pumped to some neighbourhoods, an estimated 80 per cent of the population was relying on trucked water, which was reported to be unsafe for consumption. Health facilities were reported to have been subject to looting, with medical services available at two private hospitals and only one health point. The assessment team also reported high levels of psychological distress among the civilian population, with few psychosocial support services available. While many shops were functioning, and food and non-food items were available, the low purchasing power of returnees meant that a majority of households were food insecure and in need of food assistance. Blanket distribution of nutritional supplies and non-food items, the rehabilitation of water and sanitation infrastructure, the establishment of mobile medical teams, the resumption of education services and the scaling-up of demining and mine risk education were among the other key priorities. The United Nations continued to seek to scale up assistance while managing the risks associated with explosive hazards. Humanitarian aid continued to be distributed by United Nations system organizations through local partners. For example, on 25 and 26 April, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided food assistance for 50,000 people in Raqqah city through local non-governmental organizations. This was the first WFP food delivery to the city in four years.

16. Fighting against ISIL continued. ISIL continued to retain a presence east of Dayr al-Zawr city (around the towns of Albu Kamal and Mayadin), in Hasakah Governorate, and in the Damascus suburb of Yarmouk. In Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, clashes were also observed between government forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces.

17. The second Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region was held on 24 and 25 April. The Conference was hosted by the European Union and co-chaired by the United Nations. It reaffirmed the importance of an inclusive, comprehensive and genuine political solution in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué, noting that the humanitarian and resilience needs of people inside the Syrian Arab Republic and in the region, remained enormous, while current humanitarian appeals remained severely underfunded. Participants at the conference acknowledged the continuing generosity of neighbouring host countries and their communities in providing refuge to millions of displaced persons. Participants pledged, for both the Syrian Arab Republic and the region, a total of $4.4 billion for 2018, as well as a total of $3.4 billion for 2019 and 2020. International financial institutions and donors announced an additional $21.2 billion in loans, of which elements are on concessional terms.

Protection

18. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and to damage and destroy civilian infrastructure. Explosive weapons continued to be fired into populated areas, killing and injuring civilians, and destroying and damaging vital infrastructure. Communities were littered with explosive hazards that killed and injured civilians and impeded humanitarian access. The use of improvised explosive devices in some areas added to the complexity of the explosive hazard threat. The many civilian casualties and the scale of the destruction of civilian infrastructure remained a strong indication that violations of the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution and, in particular, of the prohibition on the launching

of indiscriminate attacks, were continuing. Children were particularly affected. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2017 was the deadliest year for children in the country since the beginning of the conflict.

19. During the conflict with ISIL, Raqqah city was littered by a complex array of explosive hazards, including unexploded ordnances, landmines and improvised explosive devices that posed a direct risk to civilians and to humanitarian and reconstruction workers. Explosive hazards continued to be a major threat to civilians returning to Raqqah city, but the number of victims diminished during the reporting period. United Nations partners saw an average of 13 blast-related civilian injuries and deaths per week, down from 50 per week in late 2017. The number of child victims, however, especially boys, increased as a result of greater numbers of families returning and children playing outside in dangerous areas.

20. Fighting continued to have an impact on civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, markets and places of worship. On the basis of information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), civilian casualties occurred in various governorates, in possible violation of international humanitarian law (see annex). OHCHR has documented alleged incidents perpetrated by parties to the conflict, including government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and their allies and Security Council-designated terrorist groups.

21. In addition to violations documented by OHCHR, the Government provided OHCHR with information on alleged violations. The United Nations cannot independently verify these allegations. In a note verbale dated 10 April, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva provided lists of "shelling with mortars and missiles attacks, perpetrated by terrorist armed groups, targeting residential areas in Damascus city in the Syrian Arab Republic, on the 6th of April 2018, which amounted to 19 mortars and their locations". It stated that "those terrorist attacks resulted in 5 civilian deaths and 33 injured civilians, most of them children and women, as well as in physical damage to private and public property and infrastructure". In a further note verbale, dated 19 April, the Permanent Mission provided information on "shelling with mortars and missiles attacks, perpetrated by terrorist armed groups, targeting residential neighbourhoods of Altadhamon, Almidan, Bustan Aldour, and Bab Sharki in Damascus city in the Syrian Arab Republic, on the 15th and 17th of April 2018, which amounted to 17 mortars". It stated that "those terrorist attacks resulted in 2 civilian deaths and 10 injured civilians, most of them children and women, as well as in physical damage to private and public property and infrastructure". In an additional note verbale, dated 23 April, the Permanent Mission informed "of the shelling with mortars and missiles attacks, perpetrated by terrorist armed groups, targeting residential neighbourhoods of Almidan, Alzahira, Alkadam, Altadamon, and Albaramkeh in Damascus city in the Syrian Arab Republic, on the 20th and 21st of April 2018, which amounted to 14 mortars". It stated that "those terrorist attacks resulted in 2 civilian deaths and 8 injured civilians, most of them children and women, as well as in physical damage to private and public property and infrastructure". In a subsequent note verbale, dated 25 April, the Permanent Mission enclosed a list of the "numbers of civilian deaths and injured civilians, including children, as a result of the terrorist attacks committed by the terrorist armed groups in the Syrian Arab Republic and concentrated on Damascus governorate, using mortars, missiles mortars and explosive devices, during the period from 22 March to 21 April 2018". It indicated that "those terrorist attacks resulted in 60 civilian deaths, including 16 children, and 243 injured civilians, including 80 children".

22. Notwithstanding the call upon the Syrian authorities by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22 to cooperate with OHCHR, including

through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights, OHCHR reporting remained limited, given that the Government had not granted it access to the country.

23. The United Nations and its health partners verified 14 attacks, including air strikes, that affected health-care facilities and personnel in April, some of which repeatedly targeted the same facilities. On 6 April, the Obstetrics Hospital in Duma, eastern Ghutah, Rif Dimashq, which had previously been deconflicted by the Co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, was reported to have come under an attack that partially destroyed it. On 29 and 30 April, one person was reportedly killed and another injured as air strikes landed near the Zafrania Hospital in Homs, which had also previously been deconflicted by the Co-Chairs.

24. Educational facilities also continued to be affected by the impact of the fighting, with air strikes alleged to have damaged a primary school building in the Zawiya area in southern rural Idlib and partially destroyed a school in rural Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, also in Idlib Governorate, on 1 April. Further shelling was reported to have impacted a fence around a school in Ariha city in southern rural Idlib Governorate on the same day.

Humanitarian access

Box 2
Key points

1. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Regular programming reached more than 2 million people with food assistance through 2,196 deliveries.

2. At the same time, not a single inter-agency humanitarian convoy of life-saving relief, food and medical supplies was deployed to any besieged or hard-to-reach areas in April. The last United Nations inter-agency convoy to a besieged location took place on 15 March, to formerly besieged Duma in eastern Ghutah, carrying assistance for 26,100 people.

3. Cross-border assistance, authorized under Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017), remains a vital part of the humanitarian response. In April, 630 trucks (26 consignments) delivered life-saving assistance to more than 1 million people through cross-border deliveries. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey.

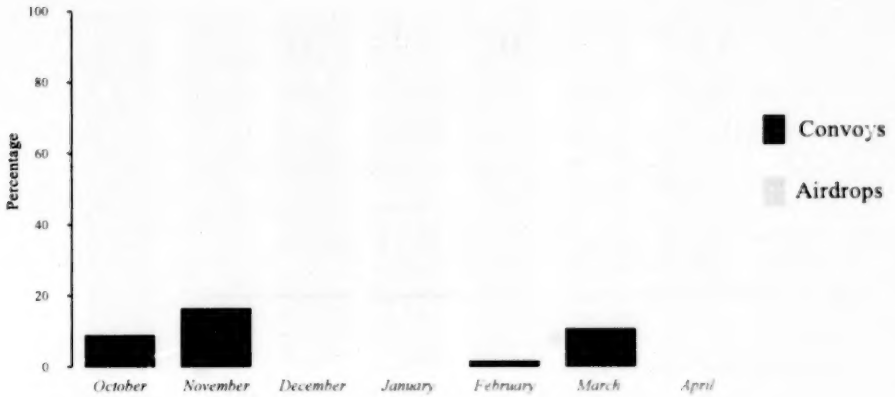
4. The United Nations estimates that, as of 26 April 2018, some 2 million people in total were living in hard-to-reach and besieged locations in the Syrian Arab Republic (compared with 2.3 million in February 2018). This number included 11,100 people (compared with 413,920 in February 2018) living in three besieged locations throughout the country, namely, Yarmouk, Fu'ah and Kafraya, and 2.04 million people living in hard-to-reach areas. This update relates to recent changes in lines of control over communities in eastern Ghutah, following a military offensive by the Government. Eastern Ghutah is no longer considered besieged but a hard-to-reach location.

25. Under the United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for March and April, access was requested to 27 locations in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, with the objective of reaching 1,027,220 people. Convoys are prepared for areas with multisectoral

needs where access is limited, to ensure that United Nations support is based on needs. In April, no inter-agency convoy was authorized to deploy to any hard-to-reach or besieged location (see figure II).

Figure II

Percentage of people reached each month in besieged areas through United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations, October 2017–April 2018



26. The United Nations estimates that, as at 26 April 2018, approximately 11,100 people (compared with 413,920 in February 2018) were living in three besieged locations throughout the country and 2.04 million people were living in hard-to-reach areas (see figure III). This update relates to recent changes in lines of control over communities in eastern Ghutah following a military offensive by the Government. Humanitarian access by some Damascus-based partners improved in eastern Ghutah, mainly through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. However, the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations continued to be unable to reach eastern Ghutah. For example, the planned assessment mission to Kafr Batna, Saqba and Hamuriyah has continued to be postponed since 3 April. In addition, commercial access and freedom of movement continued to be largely restricted, causing civilians to face challenges in accessing basic goods, services and protection. As for Duma city, the last area to change control in eastern Ghutah, humanitarian access and freedom of movement of civilians and goods continued to be restricted, as the city remained a militarized zone. Eastern Ghutah is no longer considered besieged but is a hard-to-reach location. An area is considered by the United Nations to be besieged when it is surrounded by armed actors, with the sustained effect that civilians, including the sick and the wounded, cannot exit it on a regular basis and humanitarian assistance cannot regularly enter it. Of the three besieged locations nationwide in the Syrian Arab Republic, one location (27 per cent of the total besieged population) is besieged by both government forces and non-State armed opposition groups (Yarmouk), and two locations (73 per cent of the total besieged population) by non-State armed opposition groups.

Figure III
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations, April 2018

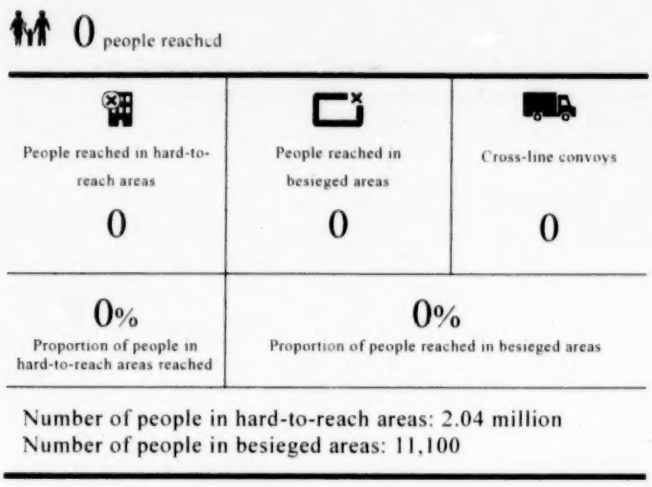


Table 1
Besieged locations, April 2018

Governorate	*Location*	*Population*	*Besieged by*
Damascus	Yarmouk	3 000	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups
Idlib	Fu'ah	5 900	Non-State armed opposition groups
Idlib	Kafraya	2 200	Non-State armed opposition groups
Total		**11 100**	

Humanitarian response

27. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners reached millions of people in need through all available access modalities, including regular programming from within the Syrian Arab Republic, whereby humanitarian deliveries reach those in need without crossing conflict lines; cross-line convoys, whereby assistance from within the country is delivered across conflict lines; and cross-border deliveries, whereby assistance is provided to those in need from Iraq, Jordan and Turkey (see tables 1 and 2). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, the Government and non-governmental organizations continued to deliver life-saving assistance to people in need. Local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continued to provide services where possible.

28. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries to locations across the country. Such deliveries are undertaken in areas in which access is less challenging through regular programming. In April, WFP submitted 2,198 official requests to the Syrian authorities to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance to locations across the country, 2,196 of which were approved. Two were rejected for security reasons. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) submitted 46 requests for facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, all of which were approved.

Table 2
People reached by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities, April 2018

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	36 500
International Organization for Migration	–
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 711 000
United Nations Children's Fund	>1 900 000
United Nations Development Programme	995 000
United Nations Population Fund	496 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	230 000
World Food Programme	2 740 000
World Health Organization	986 000

29. The conflict dramatically deepened for hundreds of thousands of people in Rif Dimashq during the reporting period. The military offensive on eastern Ghutah created extreme conditions in certain parts of the enclave that had been besieged since 2013. By the end of the reporting period, an estimated 158,000 people had left eastern Ghutah, more than 44,000 of whom remained in severely overcrowded sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq in late April. The remainder had left the sites for internally displaced persons under a sponsorship system, the details of which remained unclear to the United Nations. Close to 70,000 others, including fighters and civilians, were transported to Idlib and Aleppo Governorates, where the humanitarian response was already severely stretched. During the reporting period, the United Nations and its partners continued to respond to the mounting humanitarian needs of those at the sites for internally displaced persons, including with regard to food, shelter, health and other assistance and protection services. For example, UNICEF provided multisectoral assistance in the existing eight sites, in addition to providing support with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene, for the preparation of two newly identified sites. It also continued to support the provision of health and nutrition services inside eastern Ghutah including Duma city, through local partners. In addition, during the Global Vaccination Campaign (22–30 April), immunization activities were implemented throughout the country, including in eastern Ghutah. The UNHCR response to the needs of the internally displaced persons from eastern Ghutah included legal counselling to nearly 22,000 individuals and distributing more than 252,000 core relief items, including high-thermal blankets, warm clothes, kitchen sets, sleeping mats, mattresses, solar lamps, sleeping bags, hygiene kits and jerrycans, to assist some 60,000 individuals in sites in Rif Dimashq. In addition, UNHCR provided shelter-related support, including the installation of three rub halls and 50 family-size tents in two sites, in addition to providing 2,200 shelter kits, of which some 1,200 have been installed in various sites. The rehabilitation of three schools (180 rooms) in one site was completed during the reporting period, in addition to the installation of four sheds (large tents) in another site.

30. An estimated 137,000 individuals remained displaced from Afrin district in the Tall Rif'at, Nubl, Zahra' and Fafin areas of Aleppo Governorate. It is estimated that 50,000 people remain in Afrin city and an additional 100,000 in rural Afrin. The lack of freedom of movement of people displaced from Afrin remained a major concern, with the population largely prevented from leaving areas of displacement to return to Afrin or to reach other locations, including Aleppo city. Approval for humanitarian

access to Afrin city from within the Syrian Arab Republic had not yet been received from the Syrian authorities at the time of writing but the United Nations and its partners delivered food and health-care assistance through cross-border operations in cooperation with Turkey to I'zaz or directly to those in Afrin district. Between 2 and 4 April, six WFP trucks crossed the border with food rations for 20,000 people; three trucks of the International Organization for Migration crossed with non-food items and clothing for 3,500 people; one truck of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) crossed with health items for 6,500 people; three UNICEF trucks crossed with water, sanitation, hygiene and other health-related items for 50,000 people; and UNHCR dispatched non-food item kits for more than 1,000 people.

31. As at the end of April, Yarmouk remained besieged. The Urubah (Yalda) checkpoint remained mostly closed throughout the reporting period, in particular since the beginning of military operations on 19 April. According to reports from local observers, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) estimated that up to 6,000 Palestine refugees had fled the fighting in Yarmouk in the last week of April. Displaced Palestine refugees endured a dangerous and life-threatening journey through Urubah checkpoint to seek shelter in safer areas in Yalda and Babila.

32. Cross-border deliveries continued from Iraq, Jordan and Turkey under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (see figure IV and table 3). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including of its content, destination and the number of beneficiaries expected to be reached.

33. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations authorized under resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017) in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey. During the reporting period, the Mechanism monitored the delivery of 26 consignments by seven United Nations agencies, consisting of 630 trucks from the four border crossings: 10 from Bab al-Hawa (389 trucks), 7 from Bab al-Salam (34 trucks), 8 from Ramtha (194 trucks) and 1 from Ya'rubiyah (13 trucks). There were no concerns or questions about the humanitarian nature of the consignments sent. The United Nations provides 48-hour notice to the Government for all shipments. Once in the country, United Nations partners ensured that shipments arrived at the designated warehouses. Independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations ensured independent verification of the assistance arriving at the warehouses and monitored the distribution and/or service provision. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Iraq, Jordan and Turkey.

34. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted more than 801 cross-border consignments, with more than 20,238 trucks (13,682 through Bab al-Hawa and 2,054 through Bab al-Salam from Turkey; 4,480 through Ramtha from Jordan; and 22 through Ya'rubiyah from Iraq). These operations complement the aid provided by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

35. The United Nations and its implementing partners delivered humanitarian assistance from four cross-border entry points through Iraq, Turkey and Jordan. This included food assistance to more than 844,000 people. Moreover, the United Nations conducted health and medical deliveries, providing more than 1 million treatments through the cross-border mechanism. In the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF delivered winter kits, child protection assistance, nutrition, education, health and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies through a number of cross-border shipments. Almost 123,000 people were reached with water, sanitation and hygiene

supplies and nearly 113,000 people with water, hygiene and sanitation interventions. An estimated 25,000 children and adults received mine risk education. Mine risk education was delivered to internally displaced persons and host populations in schools, camps for internally displaced persons and communities. In addition, psychosocial support, case management services and parenting programmes were delivered in child-friendly spaces and community outreach programmes. Awareness-raising on holistic child protection issues reached almost 33,000 children and adults. A total of 128 unaccompanied and separated children received family tracing and alternative care support, while 49 children formerly associated with armed groups were identified and provided with counselling on vocational and livelihood opportunities. In addition, almost 7,000 people were provided with psychosocial support services.

36. In the southern parts of the Syrian Arab Republic, more than 440,000 people benefited from improved access to clean water through the operation and maintenance of water and sanitation systems. Of these, more than 23,400 received emergency water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, including with regard to household water treatment, the provision of hygiene kits, and the rehabilitation and repair of sanitation facilities. UNICEF partners also continued to provide life-saving nutrition services to beneficiaries in 12 communities in Dar'a. Almost 3,000 children (1,393 boys and 1,414 girls) under the age of five were screened for acute malnutrition. Of those screened, 13 children (3 boys and 10 girls) were diagnosed with moderate acute malnutrition. Two girls were diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition. All identified cases were enrolled in therapeutic and supplementary nutrition programmes. In addition, over 2,000 pregnant and lactating women were screened for acute malnutrition, 4 of whom were diagnosed with acute malnutrition and received treatment. In terms of preventative nutrition services, about 1,200 pregnant and lactating women received micronutrient supplementation and more than 1,000 pregnant and lactating women were counselled on infant and young child feeding practices. More than 1,400 children (714 boys and 774 girls) benefited from structured and sustained child protection and psychosocial support services, and 7 children (3 boys and 4 girls) were put under case management. A total of 85 individuals (54 men and 31 women) received support on parental care and engagement through parenting programmes. In addition, more than 6,000 individuals (2,934 men and 3,073 women) benefited from awareness-raising initiatives on child protection issues.

37. A nationwide immunization awareness campaign was held from 22 to 30 April. The programme was developed by the Ministry of Health in coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. Activities included a nationwide measles and polio campaign. Preliminary results indicate that nearly 325,000 children were vaccinated against measles and more than 1.3 million children under the age of five were vaccinated against polio.

38. UNHCR and its partners continued to enhance the response to the protection needs of internally displaced persons, returnees and other crisis-affected populations. By the end of April, 10,992 protection interventions had been conducted, reaching 248,239 individuals, including 204,135 benefitting from general protection activities, 3,213 from child protection activities and 37,480 through more than 1,667 awareness-raising campaigns across 12 governorates on the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence. As of April 2018, the total number of functioning UNHCR-funded community centres and mobile units stood at 94 community centres, 17 satellite centres and 74 mobile units, supported by 2,110 outreach volunteers. The centres continued to provide protection-related services, including community mobilization, child protection, legal aid, awareness-raising about the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence, livelihood support and services for

persons with specific needs to 2.6 million internally displaced persons, returnees, host communities and other crisis-affected people across 12 Syrian governorates. Moreover, UNFPA reached more than 496,000 people, providing activities on reproductive health, and on the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence and youth-related violence. Also during the reporting period, UNRWA distributed a total of 73,864 food parcels to 173,121 Palestine refugees.

Figure IV

Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners by cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, April 2018

(Thousands)

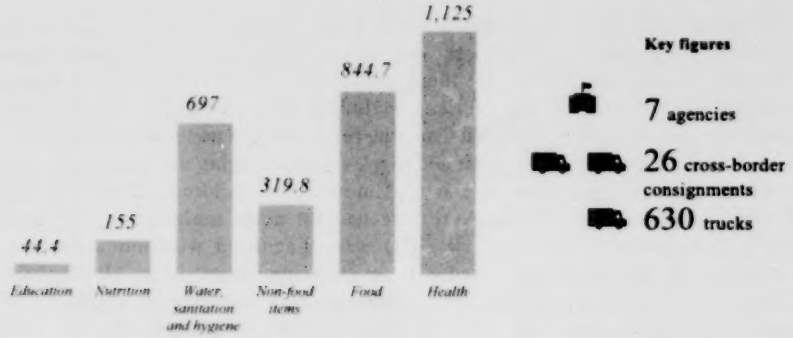


Table 3

Number of beneficiaries targeted through cross-border deliveries by sector and by district, April 2018

Governorate	*District*	*Education*	*Food*	*Health*	*Non-food items*	*Nutrition*	*Water, sanitation and hygiene*
Aleppo	Afrin	–	–	2 990	3 425	–	48 500
Aleppo	Bab	–	–	3 500	–	–	–
Aleppo	I'zaz	13 500	59 220	95 400	3 600	–	29 166
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	–	23 045	52 500	35 990	–	16 020
Dar'a	Sanamayn	–	21 540	–	–	–	38 000
Dar'a	Dar'a	7 422	114 999	3 787	124 700	–	294 527
Dar'a	Izra'	1 065	49 919	9 467	40 000	–	115 470
Hama	Suqaylibiyah	–	–	13 000	–	–	–
Hasakah	Malikiyah	–	–	23 310	12 000	–	–
Hasakah	Qamishli	–	–	50 100	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma'arrah	–	92 700	52 540	3 000	–	–
Idlib	Ariha	–	–	44 300	–	–	–
Idlib	Harim	22 400	429 316	623 400	24 386	143 127	33 888
Idlib	Idlib	–	16 500	46 400	3 000	11 855	4 250
Idlib	Jisr al-Shughur	–	–	7 800	–	–	43 800
Qunaytirah	Fiq	–	2 750	10 200	–	–	6 000
Qunaytirah	Qunaytirah	–	33 663	86 465	62 500	–	67 400
Raqqah	Tall Abyad	–	–	–	7 200	–	–
Suwayda'	Suwayda'	–	1 025	–	–	–	–

39. The Russian Federation sent information bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Visas and registrations

40. A total of 46 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in April. Of those, 24 were approved, 17 remained pending and 4 were rejected. One request was rescinded by an agency. Of the 51 new visa applications submitted in February and March 2018, 33 were approved in April, while 8 remained pending and 6 were rejected. Four requests were rescinded by agencies. A total of 69 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in April, of which 41 were approved and 28 remained pending. An additional 33 requests for visa renewals submitted in March were approved in April. For some United Nations entities in the Syrian Arab Republic, a significant number of staff are not yet in place or cannot be replaced owing to the non-issuance of visas for months, formal requests notwithstanding.

41. In late March, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syrian Arab Republic submitted a request to the Syrian authorities for the approval of the deployment of an inter-agency surge team to scale up the operational capacity of the United Nations in the country. The request was for 17 additional United Nations staff (from UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) to be deployed for a four-week period. Visa requests were submitted on 27 and 28 March. Feedback from the Syrian authorities was received on 11 April, granting 12 of the 17 visa requests.

42. A total of 23 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government to operate in the country.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

43. Agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system continued to implement programmes in areas affected by frequent clashes among parties to the conflict, air strikes, the regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and asymmetric attacks. As a result of activities relating to the armed conflict, significant areas of operation became highly contaminated with unexploded ordnances, explosive remnants of war and landmines, which pose an elevated risk to the implementation of United Nations activities in those areas.

44. Since the beginning of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including: 22 staff members of the United Nations and organizations of the United Nations system, 18 of whom were staff members of UNRWA; 66 were staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 8 were staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations are also reported to have been killed.

45. A total of 24 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme and 23 UNRWA staff members) are detained or missing.

III. Observations

46. For more than seven long years, the people of the Syrian Arab Republic have endured endless suffering. They have lived through a litany of horrors. The reporting

period saw further military escalation, particularly in the Rif Dimashq enclave of eastern Ghutah and in the Yarmouk camp in Damascus city. Both areas witnessed heavy indiscriminate bombardment and shelling against civilians and civilian infrastructure. Neighbourhoods in Damascus city also continued to be impacted by shelling by non-State armed groups, resulting in deaths, injuries and damage to civilian infrastructure.

47. The allegations of a chemical weapon attack in Duma in eastern Ghutah on 7 April once again shocked the collective conscience of the international community. At this critical juncture, I call again upon all Member States to act consistently with the Charter of the United Nations and with international law, including with regard to the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons.

48. The reporting period saw a reduction in the number of people in besieged areas, but the end of the sieges too often came only after civilians had been exposed to prolonged periods of violence and deprivation, which included the denial of critical humanitarian assistance. The end of the sieges, in many cases, followed local agreements providing for the relocation of thousands of people from the areas in question, under difficult conditions; many had been displaced several times. The United Nations is not a party to these agreements, nor is it involved in evacuations. I urge all parties to refrain from any action that might force civilians to flee their habitual residence.

49. It is critical that all parties to the conflict adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law to respect and protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. In pursuit of this aim, it is critical that the parties to the conflict and the international community redouble efforts to come together to ensure the protection of civilians across the Syrian Arab Republic, including in the de-escalation areas of Idlib and in the south-western areas of the country. The international community must prevent further suffering of civilians who have already endured too much across the Syrian Arab Republic, including eastern Ghutah, Yarmouk, Aleppo city and Raqqah city.

50. I am deeply concerned by the negative trajectory of humanitarian access in the Syrian Arab Republic. The year 2018 has seen what can only be described as a collapse in the ability of the United Nations and its humanitarian partners to reach people across conflict lines. Humanitarian organizations have also continued to see significant challenges in reaching people in areas that have undergone a change in control, most notably eastern Ghutah. The scale of needs and the immense complexity of the operating environment mean that humanitarian organizations must continue to be able to draw upon the range of delivery modalities, in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance and protection can be provided where they are needed most.

51. I reiterate that those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable. Such a step is central to achieving sustainable peace in the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call for the situation in the country to be referred to the International Criminal Court. I also call upon all parties to the conflict, all States, civil society and the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

52. I continue to urge parties to act with restraint, in accordance with international law and to avoid escalatory acts that could worsen the suffering of the Syrian people. There is no military solution to the conflict. The solution must be political. The efforts of the international community, including members of the Security Council, to end the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic are critical. These efforts must also include

strengthened support for my Special Envoy, who continues to seek a meaningful relaunch of the United Nations-facilitated political process that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people to dignity and freedom in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué. Relaunching the Geneva process necessitates consensus in the Security Council and within the international community. It is possible to alleviate and truly end the suffering of the Syrian people and bring about sustainable peace to their country.

Annex

Incidents affecting civilians, recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, April 2018*

Damascus and Rif Dimashq Governorates

- On 6 April, a ground-based strike hit a residential area in the vicinity of the Central Bank in the neighbourhood of Mazra'ah in government-held Damascus, reportedly killing one male civilian.
- On 6 April, in the afternoon, ground-based strikes reportedly hit the residential areas of Assad suburb, Barzah, Rabwah, and in the vicinity of The Umayyad Square in government-held Damascus, reportedly injuring at least 30 civilians, including 10 women, 2 boys, and 1 girl.
- On 6 April, around 1530, air and ground-based strikes hit residential areas in opposition-held Duma in eastern Ghutah, allegedly killing 28 civilians, including 2 women, 1 boy, and 1 girl, and injuring dozens of other civilians.
- On 7 April, Duma Central Hospital (also known as the "Specialized Hospital") reportedly sustained significant damage as a result of strikes. On the same day, air strikes reportedly hit and partially damaged the Hamdan Hospital in Duma, a facility specialized in prenatal and natal treatment. There were with no reports of casualties there.
- On 7 April, in the morning, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in the Mazzah 86 neighbourhood of government-controlled Damascus, reportedly killing one girl and injuring two other civilians.
- On 7 April, in the morning, ground-based strikes hit the vicinity of The Umayyad Square in government-held central Damascus, reportedly killing one civilian.
- On 15 April, strikes hit a residential area in the Yarmouk refugee camp held by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), reportedly killing an 18-year-old man and injuring four other civilians.
- On 20 April, strikes hit a residential area in the Yarmouk refugee camp, reportedly killing three civilians, including two from the same family.
- On 21 April, strikes hit a residential building in Ayn al-Ghazal Street in the Yarmouk refugee camp, reportedly killing one civilian.
- On 21 April, strikes hit a residential building in Safad Street in the Yarmouk refugee camp, reportedly killing three civilians from one family — a couple and their son.
- On 22 April, in the morning, strikes hit a residential area in the Yarmouk refugee camp, reportedly killing an elderly civilian.

* In line with Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of developments on the ground and the incidents that occurred during the month that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been able to corroborate relates to compliance with Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Ceasefire of the International Syria Support Group. The reporting is not a comprehensive listing of all violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law that took place in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period.

- On 23 April, ISIL affiliated Amaaq News Agency released a video footage that has not yet been verified by OHCHR, showing the murder of what are alleged to be two captured soldiers of the Syrian Arab Republic.

- On 24 April around 1400, strikes hit a residential building in Atta al-zir Street in the Yarmouk refugee camp, reportedly killing six civilians including three women.

- On 24 April around 1430, at least one ground-based strike hit a shopping area in Nahr Ayshah in government-held Damascus, reportedly killing 5 civilians and injuring at least 17 others.

Dar'a Governorate

- On 10 April, a 65-year-old civilian was reportedly killed when an improvised explosive device detonated close to a vehicle driving through a mud road in opposition-held western Malihah, a few kilometres to the north-east of Dar'a city.

- On 11 April, one civilian was reportedly killed when an improvised explosive device detonated on the road between eastern Karak and Rakham, a few kilometres to the north-east of Dar'a city.

- On 19 April, armed clashes reportedly erupted between ISIL-affiliated Khalid ibn al-Walid Army armed group and the opposition armed group of the Southern Front. One civilian woman was reportedly killed and dozens of other civilians were injured as a result of the clashes that were supported by ground-based strikes, reportedly hitting the opposition-held Shaykh Sa'd and Jallayn towns in western Dar'a.

Homs Governorate

- On 8 April, around 1630, strikes hit a residential area in opposition-held Mukarramiyah village, north of Homs, reportedly killing four civilians from one family — a couple and their two children. The family was reportedly riding a motorcycle on the main road between Mukarramiyah and the city of Talbisah when a strike hit in their vicinity.

- On 9 April, around 0200, strikes hit and partially destroyed a two-story house in the town of Talbisah, located to the north of Homs, reportedly killing one civilian woman and her daughter and injuring nine other civilians.

- On 29 April, strikes hit residential buildings in Adawiyah and Wadi al-Dahab neighbourhoods in government-held Homs city, reportedly killing one child and injuring four other civilians.

- On 29 April, strikes hit the opposition-held Rastan city in northern Homs Governorate, reportedly killing at least six civilians including four women and one male child and injuring several other civilians.

- On 29 April, around 1000, strikes hit the Za'faranah Hospital in the opposition-held Za'faranah town in northern Homs, reportedly killing one civilian police and injuring four other policemen who were allegedly guarding the building. The hospital reportedly sustained significant damage and is currently out of service.

Aleppo Governorate

- On 5 April, two male civilians were reportedly held for unknown reasons at a checkpoint manned by the Levant Liberation Organization in Atarib in western

Aleppo Governorate. Their whereabouts remain unknown. On 6 April, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated in the vicinity of the Grand Mosque in a large shopping area in Usfur Street, centre of Bab city in western Aleppo; reportedly killing 15 civilians, including 1 woman and 2 male children, and injuring 24 other civilians. The explosion caused severe damage as it occurred near a fuel station.

- On 10 April, a 20-year-old woman was taken from her home by unidentified armed opposition militants in Afrin city and reportedly brought for trail to "Bab Sharia Court" in the opposition held Bab city in northern Aleppo Governorate. The woman was accused of being affiliated with the Kurdish militia previously operating in Afrin.
- On 11 April, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated in I'zaz city in north-western Aleppo Governorate, reportedly injuring 14 civilians, including 1 child. The explosion also caused serious damage to vehicles and shops in the street.
- On 11 April, an unexploded ordinance detonated in one of the streets in Afrin city, reportedly killing 11 civilians, including 1 woman and her two-year-old girl.
- On 23 April, at night, two armed opposition group fighters reportedly attacked civilian vehicles being driven along the I'zaz — Kafr Jannah road; fired shots in the air; and beat a pregnant civilian woman and confiscated her money.
- On 23 April, two male civilians were killed when an unexploded ordnance detonated close to their home in Afrin city.
- On 26 April, three male civilians were reportedly injured as a result of an improvised explosive device that detonated in a marketplace in Ghandurah district, west of Jarabulus city in eastern rural Aleppo.

Idlib and Hama Governorates

- On 1 April, around 0930, strikes hit a residential area in opposition-held Urum al-Jawz village, south-west of Ariha city in Idlib, reportedly killing one civilian woman and injuring another.
- On 3 April, around 0900, strikes hit a residential area in opposition-held Ariha city, reportedly partially damaging a three-story building and injuring one civilian woman. Further strikes reportedly hit a few minutes later in the vicinity of the main market area in Ariha city, reportedly killing two civilians and injuring five others. The strikes also caused material damage in the area.
- On 3 April, around 1000, strikes hit one house in opposition held Asadiyah village, west of Ariha city, reportedly killing three civilians, including two children, and injuring three other civilians.
- On 9 April, around 1915, an unidentified explosion occurred in the Wadi al-Nasim neighbourhood of opposition-held Idlib city, destroying a seven-story residential building and reportedly killing 28 civilians, including 10 children and 13 women, and injuring dozens of other civilians. The explosion also caused significant damage to other neighbouring buildings. The same area was allegedly previously hit with strikes on 4 February, destroying a six-story building and reportedly killing 12 civilians, including 4 women and 6 children, and injuring at least 21 other civilians.
- On 10 April, between 1800 and 1830, strikes hit a shopping area at Sawma'ah Square in the city centre of opposition-held Jisr al-Shughur, reportedly killing

two civilians, including an eleven-year-old boy and a shopkeeper, and injuring five other civilians. The strikes also caused material damage.

- On 11 April around 1300, strikes hit a house in a residential area in opposition-held Qastun village, west of Hama city, reportedly killing four children and two civilian women, and injuring other four civilians and partially destroying houses in the area.

- On 24 April, around 1030, two strikes hit shopping and residential areas in Ma'arrat Hurmah village in opposition-held Kafr Nubl district in south-west Idlib Governorate, reportedly killing four civilians, including one woman and one child, and injuring seven other civilians.

Hasakah Governorate

- On 18 April, at least eight prisoners, including members of ISIL and civilians, were reportedly killed when strikes hit a house used by ISIL as a prison in south Hasakah Governorate.

Raqqah Governorate

- On 1 April, three male civilians from Safirah city in eastern Aleppo were reportedly held for unknown reasons at a checkpoint manned by the Kurdish militiamen in the Kurdish forces-held city of Tall Abyad in northern Raqqah. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

- On 29 April, one civilian woman was reportedly killed when an improvised explosive device detonated in the street of Sawami' neighbourhood in Raqqah city.

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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 22 May 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

It has been a week since the 14 May massacre carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, in which at least 62 civilians were killed and more than 2,000 civilians injured, including children. As the traumatic causes and consequences of this heinous crime remain without remedy, tensions continue to rise and despair continues to deepen, threatening even further destabilization.

The fact remains that, despite our repeated appeals for urgent international action to deter Israel from its criminal behaviour towards the Palestinian people, the absence of serious efforts to hold the occupying Power accountable and reign it in has only made our people more vulnerable to the brutality of this illegal occupation. We are thus compelled to reiterate the call made at the 15 May emergency meeting of the Security Council, and countless times prior to that, for the protection of the Palestinian people, in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law and numerous relevant resolutions, in particular concerning the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including children.

This call for protection has been echoed widely in the Security Council chamber and from capitals and humanitarian and human rights organizations worldwide. It is a call to protect and ensure the safety and well-being of a defenceless civilian population being held captive under a more than half-century occupation and a more than decade-long blockade. It has equally been a call to rescue the tenets of international law, which are being shredded by the occupying Power and those shielding it from censure and aiding it in its criminality. The consequences have been, and continue to be, dire for the Palestinian people, compelling us to persistently raise the alarm on this matter.

In this regard, I must inform you that on 15 May, the day following the massacre, Israeli occupying forces shot and killed two more Palestinian civilians, Bilal Budeir Hussein al-Ashram, age 17, and Naser Ahmad Mahmoud Ghurab, age 51, and injured

Please recycle

40 other civilians by live ammunition, including 7 children, a paramedic and a journalist. On 19 May, two Palestinian civilians succumbed to the wounds they had sustained from Israel live ammunition: Mouin Abdelhamid al-Saai, age 58, and Mohammed Mazin Alian, age 20. This brings the total number of Palestinian civilians killed to 108, including 15 children, since the Great March of Return began on 30 March.

There is an abundance of evidence that these killings were deliberate and not the result of some kind of oversight or overreaction by the occupation forces. Indeed, many of those killed were shot in the back, with weapons designed to induce maximum damage to the human body, and many were hundreds of metres from the fence: men, women, children, journalists and paramedics posing no threat whatsoever.

In this regard, it must be pointed out that Israeli army spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Conricus stated of Palestinian protesters, "We shoot in order to stop them so that they cannot harm the security infrastructure and infiltrate into Israel", a direct admission that the use of snipers and live fire to shoot protesters was not to prevent an imminent threat to life.

Amnesty International has described the killings on 14 May as "another horrific example of the Israeli military using excessive force and live ammunition in a totally deplorable way. This is a violation of international standards, with Israeli forces in some instances committing what appear to be wilful killings constituting war crimes."

A spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated that "The rules on the use of force under international law have been repeated many times but appear to have been ignored again and again. It seems anyone is liable to be shot dead or injured: women, children, press personnel, first responders, bystanders, and at almost any point up to 700 m from the fence." Journalists and human rights observers have further described "individual snipers safely ensconced hundreds of feet, even farther, away, targeting individual protesters and executing them one at a time" (Human Rights Watch).

As firmly expressed by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, at the 15 May Security Council meeting: "There is no justification for the killing. There is no excuse." Yet, some statements at the Council meeting tried to do just that — to justify the massacre. It was extremely disheartening to hear in those remarks the obscene accusation that Palestinians are somehow responsible for their own deaths. Since when does the victim bring about the act of his or her own victimization?

Had the victims of brutal massacres such as the ones witnessed on 14 May and over the past seven weeks been non-Palestinian, non-Arab, would some countries have dared accuse these victims of staging their own deaths? Of being responsible for their own suffering? Would the Security Council have been deaf to their cries for freedom? Would it have been unable to issue a statement merely calling for the respect of international law, an end to the slaughter and an investigation into the killing and wounding of so many civilians?

Statements illustrating this dehumanization of the Palestinian people include a United States government spokesperson calling the killing of Palestinians "a propaganda attempt". Gilad Erdan, Israel's Minister of Strategic Affairs, referred to Palestinian protesters in Gaza as "Nazis" twice on 14 May. An Israeli government spokesperson also "explained" that the use of live fire and the execution of Palestinian protesters in Gaza is taking place because Israel "can't put all these people in jail". In this regard, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has expressed concern about the "rise of racist hate speech and incitement to racist

violence against Palestinians by Israeli governmental officials and members of the Israeli Security Forces".

Palestinians, like all other human beings, deserve the attention and action of the international community and must be accorded protection in line with international law. The message should not be sent that their lives are dispensable, not worthy of the international community's time, not worthy of even a statement by the Security Council. To those who doubt, we repeat: Palestinian lives matter too. We grieve the lives of all who have been lost. The names of the Palestinian civilian protesters executed on 14 May are the following:

1. Laila Anwar al-Ghandoor, 8 months old
2. Ezz el-din Musa Mohamed Alsamaak, age 14
3. Wisaal Fadl Ezzat Alsheikh Khalil, age 15
4. Ahmed Adel Musa Alshaer, age 16
5. Saeed Mohamed Abu Alkheir, age 16
6. Saadi Said Fahmi Abu Salah, age 16
7. Talal Adel Ibrahim Mattar, age 16
8. Ibrahim Ahmed Alzarqa, age 18
9. Abdulrahman Sami Abu Mattar, age 18
10. Bilal Badeer Hussein al-Ashram, age 18
11. Eman Ali Sadiq Alsheikh, age 19
12. Kamil Jihad Kamil Mihna, age 19
13. Zayid Mohamed Hasan Omar, age 19
14. Motassem Fawzy Abu Louley, age 20
15. Anas Hamdan Salim Qadeeh, age 21
16. Ali Mohamed Ahmed Khafajah, age 21
17. Mohamed Abd Alsalam Harz, age 21
18. Mahmoud Wael Mahmoud Jundeyah, age 21
19. Yehia Ismail Rajab Aldaqoor, age 22
20. Mustafa Mohamed Samir Mahmoud Almasry, age 22
21. Ezz Eldeen Nahid Aloyutey, age 23
22. Mahmoud Mustafa Ahmed Assaf, age 23
23. Mokhtar Kaamil Salim Abu Khamash, age 23
24. Mahmoud Saber Hamad Abu Taeemah, age 23
25. Ahmed Fayez Harb Shahadah, age 23
26. Ahmed Awad Allah, age 24
27. Ahmed Zahir Hamid Alshawa, age 24
28. Mahmoud Yahya Abdawahab Hussain, age 24
29. Khalil Ismail Khalil Mansor, age 25
30. Mohamed Hasan Mustafa Alabadilah, age 25

31. Mohamed Ashraf Abu Sitta, age 26
32. Bilal Ahmed Abu Diqah, age 26
33. Ahmed Salim Alyaan Aljarf, age 26
34. Ahmed Majed Qaasim Ata Allah, age 27
35. Mohamed Samir Duwedar, age 27
36. Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Hamdan, age 27
37. Ahmed Mahmoud Mohammed Alrantisi, age 27
38. Mahmoud Rabah Abu Maamar, age 28
39. Musab Yousef Abu Leilah, age 28
40. Ahmed Fawzy Altetr, age 28
41. Mohamed Abdelrahman Meqdad, age 28
42. Alaa Alnoor Ahmed Alkhatib, age 28
43. Obaidah Salim Farhan, age 30
44. Jihad Mufid al-Farra, age 30
45. Ismail Khalil Ramadhan Aldaahuk, age 30
46. Omar Jomaa Abu Ful, age 30
47. Ahmed Abdullah Aladini, age 30
48. Fadi Hassan Abu Salah, age 30
49. Motaz Bassam Kamil al-Nunu, age 31
50. Mohammed Riyad Abdulrahman Alamudi, age 31
51. Jihad Mohammed Othman Mousa, age 31
52. Shahir Mahmoud Mohammed Almadhoon, age 32
53. Mahmoud Sulayman Ibrahim Aql, age 32
54. Mohammed Hani Hosni Alnajjar, age 33
55. Fadl Mohamed Ata Habshy, age 34
56. Mousa Jabr Abdulsalam Abu Hasnayn, age 35
57. Mohammed Mahmoud Abdulmoti Abdal'al, age 39
58. Abdelsalam Yousef Abdelwahab, age 39
59. Nasser Ahmed Mahmoud Ghrab, age 51

60–62. Unidentified

Additionally, more than 12,600 Palestinian civilians have been injured throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory since the protests began. Of those injured, most have required hospitalization, with many still in serious or critical condition. Among them are more than 3,500 who have been shot with live ammunition, many of whom will be disabled for life.

In this regard, Doctors without Borders stated on 14 May that "What happened today is unacceptable and inhuman. ... It is unbearable to witness such a massive number of unarmed people being shot in such a short time. ... This bloodbath is the continuation of the Israeli army's policy during the last seven weeks: shooting with

live ammunition at demonstrators, on the assumption that anyone approaching the separation fence is a legitimate target. Most of the wounded will be condemned to suffer lifelong injuries."

The mass influx of injuries has led the already crumbling health-care system in Gaza to be placed under such strain that it is now "near breaking point", according to Medical Aid for Palestinians, a United Kingdom-based non-governmental organization working on the ground in Gaza. As stated by a spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Those suffering life-threatening injuries face a nightmarish scenario in the absence of adequate hospital beds and medical services. We are still witnessing cases in which injured demonstrators are effectively prevented by Israel from exiting Gaza for treatment."

The United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jamie McGoldrick, expressed on 17 May that "Medicines and supplies are being depleted, with few resources to replenish them. Our ability to reach affected families, including children, and provide assistance is extremely limited due to funding shortfalls. Without new funding, the impact on the survivors of recent events will be far worse and our ability to respond to any new needs will be severely limited." These new needs are developing in the context of the pre-existing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza caused by over a decade of Israeli blockade and repeated Israeli military aggressions.

To compound this appalling reality, Israel, the occupying Power, has continued targeting medical staff and equipment. According to the World Health Organization, 1 medical staff member has been killed and 229 injured while providing treatment to the wounded since the start of the protests on 30 March. Thirty-two ambulances have also been damaged.

The paramedic who was killed, Musa Abuhassanin, was shot in the chest while rescuing another victim under fire. He had just come back from treating Dr. Tarek Loubani, a Canadian, Ontario-based physician, who was shot and wounded on 14 May while wearing "full hospital greens" and standing with a group of other medical professionals away from the main protest area, but in view of three Israeli sniper outposts.

Those who have not been killed while peacefully protesting in Gaza continue to die a slow death as a result of Israel's continued cruel blockade of Gaza, which has entered its eleventh year. For example, the world's leading authority on Gaza's economy, Sara Roy, has stated that "Innocent human beings, most of them young, are slowly being poisoned by the water they drink", as 95 per cent of Gaza's water resources have become unfit for human consumption.

Against this backdrop of criminal activity in Gaza, we witnessed another obscenity a week ago, on 14 May: the juxtaposition of United States and Israeli officials celebrating their violations of international law during the opening of the United States Embassy in Jerusalem with the images of bloodshed as innocent civilians were being massacred about 40 miles away in Gaza. We reiterate that, through its provocative and illegal decision, in blatant contravention of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), and the unequivocal prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force, the United States has aggravated this situation and further emboldened Israeli impunity to persist with its violations of international law and emboldened other States, including Guatemala and Paraguay, to flout international law and United Nations resolutions.

The international community must not remain silent in the face of this illegal and unjust situation. In the light of Israel's wilful killing and maiming of unarmed

protesters in Gaza, we again call for international protection for the Palestinian people as a matter of urgency.

We welcome the 18 May decision of the Human Rights Council to establish an independent, international commission of inquiry, with a view to investigating all cases of death and injury since 30 March and ensuring accountability for the violations of international law that took place in the context of the large-scale civilian protests in Gaza. This investigation must be just the start of efforts at the United Nations to bring an end to the illegal occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to the illegal blockade of Gaza and to the decades of dispossession of Palestine refugees, all of which constitute the root causes of this ongoing crisis and the brutality we have witnessed in the past month.

We also appeal to all States to continue their vital humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, especially in view of the medical emergency in Gaza, and to increase their support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which, beyond provision of assistance, remains a lifeline for so many vulnerable refugees in the absence of a just solution and amid the growing despair and uncertainty about the future.

Despite the decades of oppression faced by the Palestinian people, we remain committed to ensuring their rights, justice and human dignity, and remain convinced that peaceful means and international legality will lead to an end to their suffering. In these days of mourning, we once again call upon the international community, with the Security Council at the forefront, to act, in line with legal obligations and commitments, to address this crisis and reinforce the value and integrity of international law, as well as our faith in the international system.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 635 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 14 May 2018 (A/ES-10/781-S/2018/458), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terror and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations